

## What did you do this summer?

I saw Jesus in West Memphis, Arkansas, this summer.

On our family vacation, our radiator hose blew late on a Saturday night in West Memphis. My sources (one child who shall remain nameless) tell me that “Truck Drivers of Reddit” rank that city as one of the ten scariest cities in America.

The next morning, we walked to church looking for a reputable local mechanic. After about 25 minutes of trudging along in the mid-day sun, we saw a church. We joined hands, prayed that God would help us, and went inside.

We showed up at the end of service when the visitors introduce themselves. So my husband stood up, introduced us, and mentioned we needed help with our car. The closing hymn, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds,” should have given me a hint of what was coming next. The minister prayed their congregation would bless West Memphis and out to the surrounding areas, even to the ends of the earth.

And then, well let’s just say these people blessed our socks off.

First were the greetings and introductions, handshakes and hugs --- like Amanda in her CNA scrubs and Sister Perry in her bright red hat. A couple of men in suits were already getting an update on the car’s symptoms.

We were invited to stay for lunch — it happens every Sunday, I learned. Fellowship hall was filled with round tables draped in bright yellow cloths. I was served at the buffet by women with big spoons, each behind her assigned pan of home-cooked goodness --- pork chops, chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, rolls, green beans, carrots, trifle dessert, and raspberry sweet tea and lemonade. The Lord knew we needed some comfort and comfort food that day!

After lunch, my husband left in the church van with Brother Odell Buckingham, who had already made a trip home and back to change into his overalls. Brother Buckingham served us in the July sun by laying down on the asphalt to re-attach the radiator hose.

While the rest of us waited back at the church building, one gal sat down at our table. She broke the ice by looking at my daughter and saying, “OK. I’ve just got to ask you. Are those lashes real?” Brooke owns a salon and chatted with my girl about hair and makeup and owning a business in a depressed town. She asked hilarious questions like, “Which one of the kids needs the most attention?” and “Which twin is the mean twin?” We were all laughing at ourselves and totally unashamed of our own family goofiness.

Amanda the CNA gave us cash on her way out... “to help you get back on the road.” Like those people in Acts who gave out of their poverty. Brother Odell would not take any money for the car repair and said he was so happy he could help. We took a

picture with him, and he cautioned us about standing too close because he was sweaty. But we put him in a “Ritter sandwich” as we call it, hugging him with all twelve of our arms. I told Brother Buckingham that their pastor’s prayer --- to bless West Memphis and beyond --- had been answered, because we were from “beyond” and indeed they had blessed us.

A couple weeks before the trip one of my kids had said, “We won’t know anybody at a church out of town,” and I countered, “Yes, I know someone who will be there — Jesus!” And sure enough He met us there.

His hands restored our car, he laid down and served us by fixing what we could not fix on our own. His hands served us our meal --- and he changed my heart into a green-bean lover after all. He smiled and looked at us as if to say, “I’ve known you all along.” One of the kids reflected, “I feel guilty that we showed up at the last minute and they’re feeding us lunch.” I could look my child in the eye and say “That’s exactly what Jesus does. We show up last minute and don’t deserve it, and He lavishes his love on us.”

I saw Jesus at church in West Memphis. And now I have friends there. That’s what I did this summer.

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love.  
The fellowship of Christian saints  
Is like to that above.

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